

ABM

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# ORBIT BOMB FUROR SOLVED

Russia Has Two Systems;  
One Really Is New

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[Washington Bureau of The Sun]

Washington, Nov. 11—Officials here offer a quite simple explanation for calling to world attention only recently the orbital bomb system which the Soviet Union has been claiming to have for more than two years.

They assert unequivocally that the "fractional orbital bombardment system" discussed November 3 by Robert S. McNamara, Secretary of Defense, is not the device the Russians displayed in May and November, 1965, and claimed they could employ to put bombs in orbit.

The mechanism paraded in Red Square in 1965, described as being 115 feet long, 10 feet in diameter and having three stages, was given the Western code name of SCRAG.

## 30 Megatons

It came to be regarded in various Western quarters, notably the Institute for Strategic Studies in London, as being capable of lifting a 30-megaton warhead. A Soviet publication, *Ogonok*, spoke of 100 megatons.

All this can be disregarded entirely, officials here say in explaining why it is only now that they are spotlighting the Soviet development and further noting it still is in a flight test status. They believe, if the Russians so desire, the fractional orbital bomb can be an operational weapons system some time next year.

## First Public Clue

The first public clue that SCRAG and the orbital bomb were different came this week when Paul H. Nitze, Deputy Defense Secretary, was asked in congressional hearings whether SCRAG was the delivery vehicle for the bomb.

"No, I believe not," he replied. The matter was not then pursued.

Officials say that the fractional orbital bombardment system employs as a booster the standard rocket of the big Soviet intercontinental missile, called SS-9. For the orbital system, different top stages are used. The estimate McNamara gave was that a warhead of 1 to 3 megatons could be carried by this system.

A similar weapon could be

developed in America rather rapidly, McNamara said, but it would not be an improvement on weapons in hand. Therefore, he said, "we have no intention of revising the decision made some years ago" to reject the concept.

The Secretary was asked why the Soviet development was announced here just now.

"It's only been in the last month or two that we've seen enough tests, enough evidence of tests, to lead us to this conclusion," he said. Congressional committees had been briefed on it and it was "quite appropriate that we announce it publicly at this time."

## Evolved Over A Year

Looking back, officials can see that the Soviet orbital system probably has been evolving for more than a year. It is possible that a test launching of some sort was attempted in September, 1966.

The New York Times reported that Western tracking stations observed the breakup of that vehicle into at least 80 pieces.

The Russians did not announce this launching, nor a second in November, 1966.

Thereafter, the Russians began to announce the flights — giving them numbers in their Cosmos series — which lately have led to almost conclusive judgment here that they are testing a weapon system that could place a bomb in a 100-mile-high orbit to be delivered on a target before completing a full circuit of the earth.